

Salutations to the Raider Family from Camp Taji, Iraq. This past month certainly has seemed to have flown by as we surpass the ¼-mile marker on our one-mile test of tests. And I am proud to say that the Raiders are operating at full throttle and continue to “Lead From the Front.” We have remained busy as we conduct continuous (24/7) operations to support our attack helicopter missions. Never accepting the status quo, we continue to improve our conditions in many areas such as: sleep and work area protection (more sandbags and barriers); work and rest area construction (pilot briefing room, gazebo, sunshade, MWR Gym and internet cafe). However, since our initial occupation, we have managed to establish a fairly-stable routine which has created more predictability and has afforded some opportunities to catch our breaths.

As we relentlessly take the fight to the enemy, our Iraqi partners are truly continuing to expand their battle space. Obviously, U.S. Forces have been pivotal in forming and training the Iraqi Army and Security Forces. I would like to highlight SGT Etherton, one of our medics, who has had the unique opportunity to directly contribute to the Coalition’s efforts to build an Iraqi Army. He has aggressively tackled the task to provide medical support and training for a “Military Transition Team” based at Taji that is training an Iraqi Army Battalion. He has already been on several missions with them across the battlefields of Iraq and has performed outstanding in his duties. Keep up the great work and get those Iraqi Soldiers trained faster!

I want to welcome back SGT Neldon, SPC Murillo, SPC Aguiar, SPC Dickey, and SPC Condon from Kalsu, Iraq. I commend you for your great work in forming an operations center and airfield from ground zero. Replacements will continue to cycle through Kalsu in support of operations to the south of Baghdad on 45-day rotations.

I would like to highlight a few Soldiers for their significant accomplishments over the past month. SPC Berg and SPC Martial were promoted for their good work and time in service. SPC Martial and SPC Estrada decided to *Stay Army* and re-enlist for another six years-I hope this is not the official notification to your spouses! Thank you for your unwavering commitment and selfless service. Additionally, CPL Sayer was selected to represent the Battalion in the Brigade “Soldier of the Quarter” Board next month (MAR)-Great Luck.

I would also like to welcome a few additions to the Raider Family. SGT Alvarado, PFC Sisco, and PV2 Rausch arrived to the Company this past month and have hit the ground running. SPC and Kerri Aviles had their baby boy, Jayden Sincere on Valentine’s Day (he passed out “chocolate” cigars for the occasion). And former Raider, Kristina Smith, had her baby girl, Jocelyn Cheyenne. Congratulations!

Fortunately, this past month we have had the opportunity to start sending some of our Soldiers home on a well-deserved 2-week “R &R”. This will continue throughout the rest of our deployment, but I ask that you all remain patient for your loved ones to arrive back home on leave. This is a great privilege that Soldiers did not receive during OIF 1. Please understand that we have done our best to accommodate our Soldiers’ wishes, but operational considerations must be at the forefront of the decision-making process as we schedule leave. Nevertheless, it is a great opportunity and a sign that we are one step closer to coming home for good.

February has been a month of continual progress. The Raiders continue to better themselves and their buddies each day and make me very proud to be part of this unit. Each day is a journal entry in and of itself. Know that in our “spare time”, we have broken up the monotony with activities such as a Superbowl BBQ, Movie Nights, SGT Hess’ “Biggest Gainer” Physical Competition, playing sports, working out, etc. All have brought smiles to our faces and kept morale high. But the biggest morale booster of all is when I see a Soldier receive a letter/package in the mail or make a call back home ...nothing can replace that feeling. Our Soldiers never cease to amaze me with their positive “can-do” attitudes and we are grateful for the amazing support that continues from back home. God Bless you all and God Bless the USA!

Raiders Lead From the Front!

Raider 06- CPT J. Ross Yastrzemsky